



BASTROP COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

Foster Guidelines

Bastrop County Animal Services Foster Guidelines

Questions, Comments, Concerns? Contact Us:

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Fostering a pet in your home

Thank you for agreeing to foster a pet from Bastrop County Animal Services. We rely on foster homes to help with the overflow of animals from the shelter and giving them a better chance of adoption. We appreciate you opening your home to a homeless pet and giving them a new opportunity for a home.

By fostering a pet in a home environment, you are helping to give them a stable environment no matter what background they came from. You are also providing a loving environment and giving them much-needed love, attention, basic training, socialization, etc., that gives them a better chance of adoption.

Making the home ready to foster an animal

Fostering affects the entire family from parents to children to other pet members in and outside your home. Everyone has to work together to make this a positive experience for your family and the foster pet.

You need to all be on the same page in getting input on fostering an animal in your home. All of you will be working together to make it work and be a success and positive environment for all. You need to foster an animal that will fit with existing pets in the home. Things to consider are: what kinds of dogs or cats are appropriate in your home (size, age, physically active). Will this pet get along with your existing pet(s) in activity for play or personality and overall getting along with your other pet(s)?

You also need to make sure adding a foster to your home works with your daily schedule and routine. You'll need a pet that will fit into your home lifestyle even though the foster will be a temporary resident. Please contact our foster coordinator for any assistance you may need in working with your new foster.

Fostering puppies and kittens

Puppies and kittens should strictly be kept indoors, never to be kept outside. Puppies should be supervised outside only for exercise and potty breaks. Both should be kept out of public areas if younger than six months because of disease. Puppies should be supervised when out in

the yard to prevent escape/injury. Puppies will need heartworm prevention and/or told about medication if (six) 6 months of age or older.

Items of need

You should have the following supplies on hand before your foster arrives. If you need assistance in getting items for your foster, please contact the foster coordinator for assistance.

Food and Water Bowls: You must have separate food and water bowls for your foster pet. It is best to feed your resident pets and foster pets separately so that they can eat in a stress-free environment.

Food and Treats: Have appropriate food for your pet – puppy food for puppies, kitten food for kittens, etc. It is good to have treats on hand for training and rewarding for learning. You can get assistance with this from the coordinator if you are new to having a pet and they can advise you as to what kind of food or treats is best for your foster.

Pet Crate: It is recommended that your foster pet have a crate. Crate training is a very helpful and eases the transition into your home for your foster pet. The foster coordinator can also give you some excellent articles and advice on crate training if you are unfamiliar with the process. This is also the best way in house training your foster dog(s) and/or pup(s).



Bed/Bedding: We strongly encourage the use of bedding in your foster crate to provide comfort. Pet beds, blankets, or large towels/linens are best as they are washable and best suited for a pet's crate. If you are still house training, it is best to use bedding that can easily be put in a washing machine rather than using a pet pad that fits in the bottom of a crate.

Toys: Kongs are excellent for stuffing and provide your foster pet(s) (dogs) with mental and physical stimulation. They keep your foster pet occupied, especially while you are away from the house. Stuffed toys or balls are also great, depending on your pet's temperament. Be sure to get toys that are suited for the age of your pet, some toys can be broken apart and the pet can swallow parts of it and can possibly choke.

Collar and Leash: The shelter will provide vaccination tags that should be attached to your pet(s) collar. The collar and tag should stay on AT ALL TIMES, as it will help ensure the pet is returned to the shelter if the pet ever gets lost. Make sure the collar is the correct fit and can't cause the pet harm by being too tight or too loose. You will need a leash in proper training during walks and going outside of the home.

Flea Treatment: We ask you to keep track of applications and be sure to apply it monthly.

Heartworm Preventative: Your foster pet must remain on monthly heartworm preventative. You should know prior to fostering whether your pet is heartworm positive or negative. Do not give your pet heartworm medication if they are positive – they should then be under vet care. Puppies younger than six months of age don't need heartworm medication.

Fostering takes time

It is Bastrop County Animal Shelter's expectation that you will foster the pet you accept until it finds a home unless otherwise agreed upon in writing. Some pets get adopted in a short time frame and some take longer. Irregardless, you have agreed to the commitment of fostering this pet ahead of time and accept the time frame that is given.

Foster communication

Email is our primary and most efficient way of communicating with you. If your foster pet receives an application and the potential adopter is ready to meet the pet, you will receive an email for contact information. It is very important that you check your email at least once a day and respond accordingly. We respect your personal time and job demands but because we are all in this together, your cooperation with communicating in a timely manner is very important.



Off-site adoptions, meet-and-greets and vet visits

The Shelter holds adoption events periodically and requires that your foster dog be present. Off-site adoptions and events are our “public relations” time. This means that when you are at an off-site adoption and/or event, please make every effort to chat with people who stop by, even if they are not looking to adopt. Every person is potentially important to us – as an adopter, a volunteer, a donor, or referrals for other adopters. At any of our public events, please focus on the public.

Other pet introductions in your home

Here are some important tips that we request all foster homes follow for a smooth and successful transition.

Personal space for your pet and foster

If possible, it is best to keep foster pets and resident pets separate from each other for at least the first 14 days. This is a stressful time for both the foster pet (who may have been on the street/in the shelter/in a transition foster home before arriving at your house – a lot of change for an animal that likes to have a “pack” and stability in his/her life) and your resident pet(s). Also, there are some common sicknesses that sometimes don’t show up for the first few days that pets can often contract at the shelter, so separation can help ensure that your pets do not get sick.

If it is not possible to keep them separate, be aware that your pets may be exposed to illness. However, also be aware that many of the diseases and symptoms that shelter pets get (kennel cough, diarrhea, etc) are stress related. Many have had poor nutrition and a hard life before coming to your home. The Shelter cannot be responsible for resident pet vet bills because we do not have the financial resources to make that commitment.

This is where a crate comes in handy. If it is not possible to physically separate the pets, try to ensure that everyone has their own “personal space” of a crate with a bed. This will keep the stress levels lower for your own pets and the foster pet.

The backyard is not an acceptable place to leave the foster pet alone and unsupervised. They may be destructive (digging, trampling plants), they may be escape artists, or they could be snatched. They could be put back into the



same situation where they came from. A crate located in a quiet room is suggested.

Dog introductions

Introduce your resident pets to the foster pet on neutral territory; at a park or down the street from your house, for example. Introduce them on leash, with an adult holding each leash. Allow a quick “hello” sniff or walk-by, and then separate them, even if things seem fine. This gives them a chance to think about things, and often, they will then seek each other out to get a lengthier greeting. Give lots of positive reinforcement so that both pets feel safe and that the other pet is a friend, not a foe. Look for the signs if one pet gets aggressive then separate them quickly, comfort them, and slow down the pace of the introductions. It is also good to let one be in the lead and the other smell from behind and then switch places. This keeps the mouths away from each other if they don’t get along and also doesn’t give either animal a chance to be the aggressor.

Don’t force things if they are not immediate best friends; sometimes it takes a few days for pets to accept each other. Sometimes, pets just don’t like each other. By giving them each attention separately, and making them feel safe about their bed, toys, and food, you can minimize any tension. It is also good to not have the other’s toys/treats around so the other dog can get to them creating an aggressive situation.

Also in the prior 14 days, the resident pet(s) should have an indication of the kind of dog the foster is by observing the foster during that time. They can tell what kind of

personality the dog has by their behavior during that time so introductions might be easier when they do get to meet.

Getting along with each other

Dogs are pack animals and there is usually one who dominates. Correction of one pet by another (whether it is your resident pet or the foster) is normal. As long as the pets are responding positively to each other and seem to recognize the “pecking order,” this is fine. So, one pet may growl at another. If the pet reacts by moving away or showing passivity, then usually, the pets will get along fine. If they are constantly battling for the “alpha” position, then they will have to be separated and may not be a good fit for each other.

NEVER leave the pets unsupervised together. They are still getting to know one another, and will need correction on appropriate behavior toward each other, which means supervision. If you are leaving the house, then crate the pets or otherwise physically separate them. Again, you **MUST** feed the pets separately. This reduces stress for everyone. Food aggression between pets is common.

Cat introductions

First, make sure you choose a dog from the shelter that is cat friendly. The staff can help that by taking the dog to any cat areas at the shelter and seeing how they react to each other. Once home, the introductions can be made to your cat(s).

Make sure that your cat has his/her own sanctuary – preferably a room where the foster dog will not be allowed to go. If you can keep the cat’s food and litter box in this room, and keep the door closed, then the dog and cat can sniff each other under the door for a few days before meeting face to face. This will make things go a lot smoother as they will most likely feel they have already “met.” Supervise the dog’s behavior even at the door, reinforce playful, curious behavior and correct any aggression or obsession.

When introducing a dog and cat for the first time, put the dog on a leash and just allow the cat to walk by if he/she wants to. Here, you’re looking to evaluate both the dog and the cat. Is the cat fearful or curious? Is the dog happy/playful, anxious, or chomping at the bit?

- NEVER leave the cat and foster dog unsupervised, even if it looks like they get along great. A playful dog can still unintentionally harm a cat.
- Make sure your cat has places to jump up to in each room or hide under where the dog can’t get him/her.
- Playful chasing is normal, but always remind the foster dog to play nice/slow down/not run.
- Don’t allow the dog to stare down the cat. The dog should know that he/she is not allowed to obsess on the cat.
- The cat may swipe at the dog or hiss in order to correct. This is usually a great help in ensuring the dog knows his/her place. But, keep an eye on interactions to ensure the cat doesn’t injure the dog, as well.





With all your resident pets, allow the animals to accept one another on their own time. Never push them toward each other or force interaction. Many animals become companions and playmates, while others simply tolerate each other.

Working with your foster pet

While your foster pet is living with you, you can provide some basic training along with lots of tender loving care. No formal training regime is needed for most foster pets, but when you work on the following, it will make your foster pet much more “adoptable.” Also it is good to do small timeframes of training, their attention spans are short.

Socializing

Socializing is definitely the first priority. This means ensuring that your foster pet is acclimated to meeting new people, pets, cats, children, as wide a group as possible. If you have a shy pet, this is a big task, and should be approached slowly (but all the more important to address it so that your pet overcomes his/her shyness.) With a more outgoing pet, it's more about curbing enthusiasm so that people aren't overwhelmed upon meeting the pet (or knocked over with love!)



Food aggression

Food aggression with other pets is a fairly common trait – however food aggression toward people is not acceptable. If your foster pet is growling when you are near their food, you need to work on correcting this behavior. Hand-feed the pet, so that it's clear the food is yours, and you are the giver of food. Then, if you feel comfortable, when feeding with a bowl, take it away several times during the meal, giving it back after the pet sits and waits politely. IF you feel uncomfortable working on these issues with your foster pet, please contact a Shelter director immediately before the problem progresses! With a non-food aggressive pet, these are still good tips, along with taking “chewies” away and giving them back. If the pet growls a bit, tell them “no,” and then practice taking it until they get the idea. Repeat daily. If your foster pet is showing food aggression with your pet over food or chews, always feed them separately. Another good reason to crate your foster pet, as you can use that place as a safe place to give treats, chews and toys.

House training (dogs)

House training (potty training) is definitely desirable for both you and the future adopter. The best way to house train a dog is to use a crate, and to be vigilant about taking the pet regularly outside, including after naps and meals. If your foster pet is particularly stubborn about house training, keep him/her on a leash in the house until

you establish a regular schedule. This will prevent them from wandering off to hide to go potty. If accidents in the house continue to occur, please contact a Shelter director for further advice.

Litter box training (cats)

Cats do not come into this world 'knowing' how to use a litter box. Cats learn what and where the "bathroom" is from their mom at about four weeks of age. Learning can happen so quickly that the casual observer may be unaware that any active instruction has taken place. Many of the cats that come into our foster program are already in litter box training, so no need to worry. In the case of orphan kittens, the caretaker must introduce the box concept, otherwise the kittens will randomly choose a spot and imprint on the texture. The kitten should be placed in the litter box upon waking, after meals and vigorous play. The front paws can be dragged through the litter to simulate digging/covering. Most kittens take over and successfully use the box right away.

Crate training

Crate training is a great way not only to potty train, but also to establish general house manners since the foster pet will not be roaming free in the house unless he/she is being supervised. So, no chewing on couch cushions, counter-surfing, or garbage diving can occur if the pet is not left alone. We have more materials on crate training available to you, upon request.

Sitting (dogs)

Sitting is relatively easy to teach and pays big dividends. We ask that all foster parents to make their foster pet sit for his/her leash, food, and toys, so that they know they are subservient to the person commanding

them to sit. It also helps to get an overly excited pet under control.

Jumping up (dogs)

Jumping up is a common problem with our foster pets – they are so happy to have someone to love! But it's best if they are taught not to do this, since it can knock people over or just be rude. The best prevention is to see it coming and tell them to stop and sit. Foster pets should never be invited "up" for a visit.

Leash training (dogs)

Leash training is challenging to teach. Many of our pets have never been on a leash and have no idea how to behave. If you're ambitious, you can work on "heel", but even "easy" is fine. "Easy" is when the pet isn't necessarily healing at your side, but they are also not dragging you down the street. This takes time to learn and patience on your part. A nervous pet may not be pulling but reluctant to walk or trying to get away from you and the leash. The goal then is to get the pet to relax and walk confidently with you. We can give you some pointers on either of these cases, upon request.

Squirt bottles and air spray corrector

Squirt bottles can be a great way to get the point across to a dog or cat that is not responding to a verbal correction. Fill a squirt bottle with plain water and set the nozzle to stream (not spray.)

A quick squirt in the face with a verbal command such as "no" or "down" at the same time can be very effective. It does not hurt the





pet, but it catches them off guard and can be helpful in getting their attention. Generally, you can move to verbal commands only after a time. Pet Corrector Spray (available at your local Petco or PetSmart) is a great training tool as well.

Pets and children

Pets and kids are great playmates, guardians and confidants. But children must learn proper handling and discipline, and pets must learn self-control so that they do not play too rough.

Children must be supervised and taught that pets are beings, not dolls or toys to dress-up or handled constantly. Teach children not to tease or rile up the pet unnecessarily. This includes chasing around the house, which can scare a pet, who may snap if cornered or frightened.

Make sure your children know that it is not the pet's fault if the pet chews up toys that are left out. Keeping doors shut and toys in toy boxes can help minimize damage. Make sure the pet has his/her own toys, and keep them in the same place all the time (like in a basket, or in the pet's crate.) Children like the idea of caring for a pet, but the daily work of feeding, bathing, brushing and cleaning up after the pet is not really suited for them.

Recognize that the initial enthusiasm will wane quickly and the true responsibility of caring for the pet will fall to the adults in the household. Young children should not walk foster pets, as, even if the pet is easy to walk, the child cannot really handle any encounters with other pets or cats that are bound to happen.

Children should not play unsupervised with foster pets. Teach proper handling (pick up by the body, not the limbs), and limit interaction.

Children need to be taught that a puppy's mouthing is not biting, and that the puppy is not trying to hurt them. Perhaps most importantly, children must learn to properly discipline the foster pet (a sharp "no"). Children often react to a pet's bad behavior by hitting the pet, THIS IS unacceptable.

General guidelines

Please read and review the following important guidelines:

- Please make an appointment with Amanda for vaccines, testing (i.e., combo and heartworm test) at 512-549-5160.
- All Foster Homes agree to accept primary responsibility for providing lodging and care of their foster pet until a permanent adopting family is found.
- If you think your foster pet needs any medical care, including vet visits or over-the-counter medications, please contact the Foster Coordinator before acting.
- Foster Homes agree to bring their foster pet to adoption events. These events are a primary method of matching up potential adopters with our pets.
- Foster Homes are asked to keep their Shelter contact apprised of their foster pet's behavior if any issues arise.
- Foster Homes are not required to foster any pet that they do not wish to foster. However, there may not be an immediate alternate foster home for your pet.
- All applicants for a particular foster pet must go through the Bastrop County Animal Shelter application. If a friend or family member of the Foster Home wishes to adopt your foster pet, that's great! But the adopter must go through the same process as other applicants.
- Your own pets should be current with their vaccinations. We also recommend that you vaccinate your pets with a Bordetella vaccination to prevent kennel cough, a common illness with shelter pets.

- Bastrop County Animal Shelter is not responsible for any veterinary bills for resident pets. The Foster Home assumes responsibility for any veterinary bills that result from resident pets becoming ill due to exposure with a foster pet. However, there is a Foster Medicine Cabinet at the shelter that can be accessed if necessary.
- If you are planning a vacation, please notify the Shelter as far in advance as you can. We will need at least two weeks to arrange for alternative placement for your foster pet. If you want to take your foster pet with you, even for just a weekend, you **MUST** notify the Shelter beforehand. If the Shelter has an applicant interested, we may make arrangements to keep your pet locally to be able to show him/her.
- Do not leave your foster pet with anyone else without prior approval. Any time a foster pet is left with someone else we **MUST** have a signed release of liability.

Finding your foster pet a forever home

ALL Fosters Parents are **REQUIRED** to submit a biography about their foster pet and a minimum of three photos upon arrival. The initial biography about your foster pet can be brief and updated as you get to know them. If you need help taking photos of your foster pet, please let us know and we can put you in touch with a photographer to arrange a photo shoot. Please send your foster pets' biography, photos, and updates to the foster



coordinator at the shelter. It is also wonderful to do some videos with your foster dog socializing with other dogs and maybe some basic training.

Tips for writing a biography

Every pet has a forever home waiting for them but we need your help to find that forever home. When writing your foster pet's biography, please consider the following:

- Be positive, but honest.
- State gender, age, and medical history.
- Note cute/funny characteristics (show some in the photos if possible)
- Good with dogs? Good with cats? Good with kids?
- Energy/activity level.
- What environment would your foster pet thrive in?
- Include attributes that will attract potential adopters.

Tips for taking good photographs

We can't stress this enough. A photo is worth a thousand words! The photos of your foster pet are the first thing people see when they visit Petango's website. If the pet has poor photos, visitors may move on to another pet without clicking or reading your foster pet's biography. If you want to give your foster pet the best chance possible, take large, clear, good quality (high resolution) photos of your foster pet. A good photo is often the difference between a foster pet who generates inquiries and one who doesn't. Take a lot of digital photos. You may have to take 50 photos to get one or two really great shots. Please contact us if you need assistance taking photographs of your foster pet.

When taking pictures of your foster pet please consider the following:

- Capture photos of your foster pet outside
- Find a nice backdrop
- If you have pets/children incorporate them into two or three of the pictures
- Obtain at least one good "face/head shot" and "body shot"
- **DO NOT EDIT OR ALTER THE PHOTOS IN ANY WAY!**

At times, there will be foster events where a photographer will be available to shoot photos of your foster. Please take advantage of this since having more people there to help will create better photos of your foster.

Foster pet updates

We ask all fosters to provide us with updates and photos. These updates and new photos help us network your foster pet. Please send these updates to the foster coordinator at **amanda.smith@co.bastrop.tx.us**.

Adoption process

The Shelter's adoption counselors work hard to find the proper match for each of our pets, to ensure that both the adopting family and the pet will be happy with their decision. All applicants must go through the Shelter adoption process. Pets cannot be adopted out to friends

or family of the foster home directly, all applicants must be properly screened. It is important for you to understand our adoption procedures, however, since you will get questions about it. The adoption process is as follows:

The applicant fills out an application, preferably using our online application at <http://www.petango.com/bastropanimalshelter>, one attached to this guideline or at the shelter.

A Shelter Counselor reviews the application and screens the person to see if they are a good fit; calling their veterinarian and personal references listed.

The adopter and all members of their household must meet the pet.

The adopter fills out an adoption contract and pays the adoption donation (the amount of the adoption donation varies per pet, and is determined by the pet's medical and physical needs).

If there are multiple applicants, the adoption counselor will ask your opinion, review the applications, consult other Shelter adoption counselors, and make a decision best suited for the pet.

ALL pets are spayed or neutered (age/medical history permitting), micro-chipped, up to date on their vaccinations (age appropriate), and have had a general physical before being placed. If an animal is sick or recovering from injury, we will usually not place the pet until he/she has fully recovered.

Since all adoptions must be handled directly by a Shelter Adoption Director, it is important that you let us know any concerns you have about the requirements for your foster's adoption home. This includes how long the pet can be left alone, how the pet is with cats/children/other pets, and any other pertinent information. We maintain a requirements list for each of our foster pets to ensure that the pet's needs are met.

The best way to communicate for questions and concerns regarding the foster animal is to contact the **foster and rescue coordinator at Bastrop Shelter at 512.549.5160 or amanda.smith@co.bastrop.tx.us**.



Links to important information

Shelter Foster and Rescue Coordinator

amanda.smith@co.bastrop.tx.us

Petango.com

<http://www.petango.com/bastropanimalshelter>